

A Political Vendetta

By
WELDON J. COBB

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

Hope sprang to the gap, hands outstretched, to stay his speeding foot, but Kane had vanished. Peering past the edge of the broken balcony floor, he saw Kane go feet foremost down past the sidewalk and through a window area, arched like a tunnel.

The fall was a full twenty feet.

"Has he escaped me—killed?" cried Hope. The thought aroused him to quickened action. He swung back to the window, upsetting an obtruding politician, whose attention had been attracted by the noise of the scuffle—in the precipitancy of his rush.

He leaped to the room, down a staircase and out to the street. Hope hurried. He reached the spot where he had seen Kane disappear. He stared down the dark staircase, then called:

"You—Kane?"

No response. He knelt and flared a Lucifer. Its rays showed a shallow dip, faced only by the barred cellar window.

"Gone!"

Electrified, baffled, Hope sprang to his feet, perfunctorily pendent above far nothingness, at midnight, here and there in the tragedy under play—the final, fatal blow to the watchman, face of the hamited eyes, the trembling, twitching frame of the man upon whom his glance rested, told him surely that Percy V. Kane, wrecker, assassin, fugitive, was at the last ditch:

CHAPTER XIII

Kane bore the appearance of a man in a frightful state of mental incertitude and excitement. The high strain of tremendous thoughts obtruded all his customary steadiness of glance and bearing, and even his hair was disheveled.

He had alarmed—had warned—his enemy. Kane's one thought now would be of flight, of hiding. He was begged, discredited; the friends he had dragged down to ruin would be friends no longer.

Hope could think out his probable course. First, money—then, distance. Would he baffle vengeance? Oh, never, never!

Kane parted the crowd in the street without ceremony. He reached a more quiet side thoroughfare. An empty cab dashed around the corner, its driver fresh for his night's work, the steel attached mettled and ready for speed.

In a minute Hope was inside, brief, exact orders given to the cab driver. The vehicle became a thing of flight.

CHAPTER XIV.

Inside of the hour Hope made three calls—all disappointing ones. To the elegant apartments occupied in the past by the arch-swindler, to the home of his chief and confere, to a club where both sometimes spent their evenings.

He got trace of the company president, but with the chief's name, inciting fear and despatch, in strong drink. With him Hope had nothing to do, so he continued his search, but he gained no conclusive trace of the man he sought.

He knew the machinery of the law well, from past critical experience, and besides had a hundred—a thousand—ready sides whom he could rely on—recent assistants in the political battle he had fought so hard to win, but which now seemed as a battle, more or less, lost.

The last night of the triumphs and the last at an immediate public denunciation of his enemy. A slow, refined method of meting out his vengeance appealed to him, and he considered only personally securing the fugitive again, secretly arranging him, probing deeper for detailed confession and positive, conclusive proof that he was a traitor.

"I know of course," observed the cashier. "But I estimated you knew your business. You telephoned to me to get two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash, bills of large denomination, and three bills—yes."

The smile of face flamed with gladness and unshaded triumph.

"Now, what is your proposition?" re-asked the cashier.

"Simply this."

"I am saying for that also," observed the bank cashier.

He placed a hand beyond the buttoned lapels of his half-withdrawn coat, which replaced again, a bulky, oldish package.

Kane's eyes lit up electrically, and immense aspiration of relief, of joy, escaped his lips.

"Friend, indeed!" he cried, effusively grasping and wringing the hand of the other. "Worth is life or death for the Trust! It was a queer message to send to a man—in the dead of night, but there was no other way. See here—this friendly bond still found in the Stein mountains in the southern part of the Harney County, but it numbers only five ewes and three rams.

"Among the native wild birds, the snow heron has suffered most.

It is practically extinct in this State because for years it has been sought by the plume hunter. The only two colonies in the State we have known of were in Klamath County and on Lake Malheur. Both of these were annihilated years ago. For more than a month we cruised Malheur lake in a small boat hunting for the remnants of those snow-white birds. In all that time we saw only two snow-white herons. I doubt if more than two dozen of the birds are to be found in the State, while in the '90s one of the plume hunters made more than \$1,200 in a day and a half shooting up the colony.

From the sportsman's standpoint the sage grouse, or sage hen, is a good game bird, but their numbers are falling rapidly. They can never hold their own like the Chinese pheasant or even the quail or the sooty or blue grouse.

"We have found several new and interesting birds that we have not met with in our previous work. The bobolink, for instance, is a common resident of Harney County and sings as sweetly in a New England meadow.

The cowbird and the eastern kingbird we found all through that section of the State. We also found a colony of white-faced glossy doves breeding on Lake Malheur. This is a rare bird for our State, and the colony we found is the only one we know of in Oregon.

"On the whole, Malheur lake is the greatest feeding and breeding ground for water fowl of the Pacific coast. I doubt if its equal exists anywhere in the United States."

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